

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A thermal treatment apparatus comprising:

a furnace of a refractory;

a stage capable of carrying a synthetic silica glass ingot or a synthetic silica glass block and moving between a first stage position for holding the synthetic silica ingot or block inside the furnace and a second stage position for holding the synthetic silica glass ingot or block outside of the furnace;

a heat generator for heating the synthetic silica glass ingot or block, the heat generator being provided on a surface of the furnace and having a dimension in a vertical direction so as to surround a vertical plane of the synthetic silica glass ingot or block in the first position; and

a driving section connected to the stage, for moving the stage between the first stage position and the second stage position.

2. (Original) A thermal treatment apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a rotational driving section for rotating the stage.